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Request for the inclusion of an item in the provisional agenda of the fifty-sixth session

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum

Note by the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 22 May 2001 from Teburoro Tito, President of Kiribati, requesting the inclusion in the provisional agenda of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, in accordance with rules 13 and 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, of an item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum".

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Annex

Letter dated 22 May 2001 from the President of Kiribati to the Secretary-General

Since the establishment of the Pacific Islands Forum (formerly the South Pacific Forum) in 1972, the Heads of State or Government of the member countries have collectively shown their resolve to pursue regional integration, stability and prosperity for their respective peoples.

The Pacific has been long renowned in history as a region of peace, tolerance and cultural and traditional diversity. Respect for the rule of law and democratic principles have been enshrined in the region. However, this pacific doctrine is facing real challenges as island nations try to balance colonial forms of governance, globalization and the rights of traditional resource owners. Recent events in Fiji, Solomon Islands and on the island of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea are the result of serious dramatic changes and the complexity of conflict prevention and peace-building. It is acknowledged that the root causes of these problems are complex.

At the twenty-fifth South Pacific Forum, held in Brisbane, Forum leaders acknowledged the importance of broadening its exchange of information and consultation with the United Nations Secretariat in New York and approved the Forum's applying for observer status with the United Nations General Assembly. In Rarotonga, Cook Islands, the leaders again expressed appreciation for the contribution to the region of the work of the United Nations in the areas of development and the environment, and emphasized the need for a strengthened United Nations Organization, responsive to the needs of smaller countries.

In 1995 Forum leaders adopted a Vision Statement and the Forum Economic Action Plan Eight Principles of Good Governance and, in 1997, in the Cook Islands, the Aitutaki Declaration on Regional Security Cooperation.

Recently, in October 2000, Forum leaders, while respecting the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other member countries, committed themselves and their countries to a number of guiding principles and courses of action called the Biketawa Declaration,[1] which mandates the Secretary-General of the Forum to initiate action in relation to a crisis in one of the member countries. Dealing with complex causes of conflict and tension is a daunting challenge which requires a significant amount of resources. The Forum countries stretch across half the world.

These are significant developments reflecting the changing policies of Forum member countries, a greater willingness to undertake a collective discharge of duties, and confidence in the rule of law and good governance. The Forum member countries have also endorsed the Millennium Summit outcomes and the General Assembly's Declaration on a Culture of Peace.

Forum member countries, most of them small island States, are committed to the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States adopted in Barbados in 1994, following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held at Rio, Brazil, in 1992. The region strives to implement strategies for sustained economic growth that protects

[1] Adopted at the thirty-first Pacific Islands Forum in Kiribati.

the environment and enhances the capacity for greater productivity. Given their limited size and markets, Forum island countries are heavily dependent on imports and are making every effort to mitigate the adverse impacts of trade liberalization, climate change and sea level rise. Development assistance, both bilateral and multilateral, continues to be an important source of national revenue for many of these States, and their fisheries and marine resources are among the largest in the world. In this regard, Forum countries are deeply committed to their international agreements on matters related to the sea and ocean.

The issues before the United Nations have serious implications for the region and individual countries. Recently the United Nations embraced five of our members, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Tonga and Tuvalu, as new members of the Organization, and we are grateful for the support of the international community. Forum member countries value the relationship with the United Nations and have played their part in promoting the objectives enshrined in the Charter of the Organization.

While some of our members are relatively new to the United Nations family, others such as Australia, New Zealand and Fiji have been strong contributors of United Nations peacekeeping forces serving in the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Africa. Recently the Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum, Noël Levi, CBE, attended the fourth high-level meeting between the United Nations and regional organizations. This initiative of yours is timely for regional security cooperation between our two institutions in the area of preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution and peace-building.

On behalf of the Forum member countries[2] I have the honour to request, in the spirit of wider international cooperation and friendship, the inclusion in the provisional agenda of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly of an item entitled: "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum".

This item would facilitate plans to integrate multi-sectoral cooperation between the United Nations and build upon experience that the United Nations has with other cooperative arrangements with regional organizations. The Forum island countries are committed to establishing this partnership in the interest of global peace and prosperity for all peoples. Such an institutional framework would reaffirm that the steps taken by the Forum countries will be enriched by the support of the international community, and serve as a landmark towards better coordination and cooperation for our region.

This arrangement would strengthen our relations, provide an avenue for the General Assembly to identify areas for mutual support and cooperation with a view to building lasting solutions for peace and development for Pacific Islands Forum countries and the region as a whole.

(*Signed*) Teburoro **Tito**
President
Republic of Kiribati

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[2] Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu, Tonga, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.